

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING

February 4, 2015

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Procedural

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OFFICERS PRESENT: Gail Hoffnagle, President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Walsh; Miriam Erb; Bob Burkholder; Corinne Stefanick; Brian Posewitz; Ellen Burr

President Hoffnagle called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm, and began by asking those present to introduce themselves, around the room. Gail then announced the good news that the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation had sent her an e-mail indicating a plan to return the Sellwood Community Center to the PP&R budget for this year and next.

Amy Higgs of the Bureau of Environmental Service was slated to appear and report on the progress of the current lengthy sewer rehabilitation project in Westmoreland and Sellwood, but was unable to attend, so President Hoffnagle read her brief report to the attendees of the meeting.

Then Brian Posewitz, SMILE Board member and Chair of the SMILE Transportation Committee, stepped up to introduce Dan Layden, Director of Capital Projects in the Portland Bureau of Transportation, and Mark Gamba, of the Milwaukie City Council, who were present to seek public response to a proposal resulting from long-established and fully-funded plans by the City of Milwaukie to finish a Clackamas County “Trolley Trail” for bicyclists and pedestrians from Oregon City up to S.E. Ochoco Street – on the west side of S.E. 17th opposite Garthwick, at the south end of Sellwood. The City of Milwaukie had wondered where users of that trail should go at Ochoco Street, to transfer to the Springwater Corridor Trail in order to proceed to Downtown Portland. PDOT suggested directing bicycle traffic through Garthwick, exiting and entering on S.E. 13th.

Many residents of Garthwick were present, and for many of them, this proposal seemed abhorrent.

Gamba began his remarks by saying that the design of the Trolley Trail is 30% complete, and since the Springwater Trail is not complete to S.E. 17th in Sellwood yet, Milwaukie needed a solution to link one trail to the other safely. From the point of view of those in Southeast Portland, he pointed out, this connection would also provide the opportunity of biking or walking from Sellwood all the way to Oregon City. There had been a possible complication in that Clackamas County maps dating back a century or more show the western side of S.E. 17th opposite Garthwick to be owned by the City of Portland – but Portland’s current maps show all of 17th there to be in Clackamas County. (Layden said this was really no problem in any event, since Portland would simply have issued a permit to Clackamas County, if needed, to run their trail on the west side of S.E. 17th.)

Pat Hainley offered the opinion that this trail might better run through Milwaukie and up along McLoughlin to Ochoco Street, but Gamba pointed out that the planned route was established with public input and in cooperation with Metro and other agencies a number of years ago, and the plan is now well-advanced.

As concerns the idea to connect the two trails through Garthwick – at least until the Springwater Trail is completed from 13th to 17th – Dan Layton stepped forward and said that “this is a year or more away, and if this plan is implemented, it would **not** involve painting or establishing bike lanes in Garthwick, would **not** cause two-way traffic for vehicles to be established (just bikes), and would **not** reduce street parking. It might involve signage and painted “sharrows” on the street, at the most.

However, it became clear that Garthwick residents were firm in their belief that two-way vehicle traffic would be allowed where it currently is not, and did not credit Layton’s assurance that it would not. He responded that this is definitely not going to happen; it had been suggested by a planner early in the discussion, and had been ruled a nonstarter, and is not on the table now.

A Garthwick resident threatened a lawsuit. Layton pointed out that this proposal is just preliminary – “a greenway treatment that will simply allow bicyclists to do what they are probably already doing”. He added, “Our long-term master plan shows 17th as a bike facility, but that may be three or more years away.”

An attendee who disagreed with the apparent consensus arose to say that he lives there, and bikes there, and people are riding bikes between Portland and Milwaukie on S.E. 17th, and the only question here is how they are to do it. “This is really a minor issue. People ride through Garthwick now. This plan would not mean more traffic in Garthwick than is taking place now.”

There followed an extensive period of time in which, moderated by President Hoffnagle, the majority of the people in the room each took a turn to comment, and most still seemed adamantly opposed to the proposal; there remained obvious disbelief that the City of Portland would not change the one-way nature of any streets in Garthwick for vehicles, regardless of the many assurances given.

Layton said that this is still “early days” – there will be no construction along 17th by Milwaukie for a year or more yet. The process this evening was simply to have a dialogue rather than to present a finished plan, as some present said they wanted. Brian Posewitz wryly observed that had the two cities come to SMILE to present a finished plan, probably there would have been much protest.

President Hoffnagle, noting that the discussion had gone considerably past the time allotted to it on the agenda, asked the two presenters to please return to a future SMILE meeting with more specifics.

Hoffnagle moved on to ask all present to review the three sets of minutes from the November, December, and January SMILE General Public Meetings, and consider them for approval. Ann McManamon moved that all three sets of minutes be approved as submitted, and Mirian Erb seconded the motion, which then carried without objection.

Hoffnagle then introduced Jim Gorter and Sara Long of “United Neighbors for Reform” to present on their group’s efforts to modify the home demolition rules of the City of Portland. Gorter started by observing that, “The demolition of single family homes is becoming a major issue in Portland.” City Commissioner Amada Fritz is heading an effort to examine and revise the rules, he said, but the advisory committee of 17 individuals has 15 developers on it.

“Our group is informal – no officers or bylaws – but we have been successful in shaping the city’s views on this issue,” said Gorter. The group has prepared a resolution on demolition, and will be present to address the revised demolition rules to be proposed at City Hall next week – on Thursday, February 12, at 2 pm. The group also hopes to preserve historic and affordable homes in the city. The presentation was well-received by those present, and the pair received applause.

Bob Burkholder moved adjournment, and Corinne Stefanick seconded; motion passed at 9:09 pm.